

Planning and Implementing the Daily Routine in Slovene Kindergartens and Reggio Emilia Concept

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Authors in this paper present the design and implementation of daily routines in Slovenian kindergartens. Slovenian national document for preschool education, *Curriculum for Kindergartens* (1999), describes daily kindergarten activities (communication and interaction with and among children, use of compliment and reprehension, and rules for controlling time and space) as equally important as curriculum's written goals and contents. Because hidden curricula may have the strongest effect in the implementation of the daily routine (Apple, 1992; Kroflič, 2005), we loosened past ideological influences on the kindergarten practice and centered our curricula on preschool teachers' awareness of the importance of hidden curricula elements in the implementation of daily routine. Results ($N = 331$) of a research, part of a project called "Professional training of educational staff for implementing special educational principles of Reggio Emilia concept in the field of preschool education in the years 2008–2013", done in years 2009 and 2011, show that there have been some changes in the planning of daily routine. The biggest shift in the implementation of the daily routine was made in so-called "toilet training" and care for personal hygiene. Research results also show that there are some changes in the implementation of nap time or sleeping, which according to the *Curriculum for Kindergartens* (1999) must not be mandatory for all children, and also in the implementation of focused activities and eating. For even better practice, there will have to be more continuing education and training for professional workers in education with the goal of developing additional competences for recognizing the elements of hidden curricula and implementing a child's active and supportive process of care and education.

Keywords: preschool education, curriculum, Reggio Emilia, daily routine, continuing education and training

Introduction

In Slovenia, we have a well-developed system of organized preschool education in comparison with the rest of the world, which is an integral part of the system of care and education, and is under the Ministry of Education and Sports¹ since 1993. It runs according to the principles of democracy, pluralism, autonomy, competence, and responsibility of employees, equal opportunities for children and parents, taking into account the diversity among children, the right to choice and diversity and to maintain the balance between the child's physical and mental development. Children at the age of 1–6 years old are included in a unified system of preschool education, kindergartens are optional and set up and financed by the municipality. Depending on time and length, the most extended are all-day programmes within which children are placed in two age groups

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¹Since 2012, this ministry is called Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports.

of 1–3 years old and 3–6 years old. The children are grouped into age-homogeneous, heterogeneous, or mixed groups. Total care for preschool children in kindergarten also includes nutrition and the possibility of rest or sleep. The fundamental task of the kindergartens in Slovenia is to help parents with comprehensive care for children, improving the quality of life of families and children and creating conditions for the development of children's physical and mental abilities (*White Paper on Education*, 1995; 2011).

Curriculum and Hidden Curriculum in Preschool Education in Slovenia

Professional basis for work in public kindergartens is *Curriculum for Kindergarten*, accepted in 1999 on the basis of the *White Paper on Education* (1995) and the *Law on Kindergartens* (1996). The curriculum presents goals of curriculum for kindergarten from which the principles and fundamental behaviors of child development, learning in preschool and the global goals and derived objectives for each of the fields are derived. Some interdisciplinary activities including the implementation of the daily routine are however, as a red thread interwoven through all fields and a way of life and work in kindergarten. The concept of the curriculum was implemented in kindergarten primarily because of its width, which covers the entire lives of children and adults in kindergarten. Children with their development and individual capabilities and their activities are placed in the foreground; the emphasis is given to their rights. Among the most important objectives of the curriculum we would suggest in particular, better enabling the individuality, diversity, and choice, and greater respect for the privacy and intimacy of the child (*Curriculum for Kindergarten*, 1999, p. 7).

An important part of the curriculum is also hidden curriculum, which is an integral part of the curriculum, but we can say that it is outside pedagogical and psychological concept. Hidden curriculum and curriculum are strongly associated among themselves, so that they cannot be seen as two separate phenomena. The contents of the hidden curriculum teach children norms and values, by means of which their personal behavior in group is disciplined and regulated. It refers to something that holds together the entire institution. Of course, hidden curriculum also has its disadvantages, because children in kindergarten could be trained for obedience, passivity, dedication in destiny, indiscriminate acceptance, and alienation. It may happen that a child breaks in routine, in which he is trapped, learns to tolerate contacts and receive plans of preschool teacher, which already reminds of the manipulation (Bahovec & Golobič, 2004). Hidden curriculum covers many elements of educational influence, which are nowhere defined, although they are in many cases more effective than direct educational activities, which are defined in the prerecorded curriculum (*Curriculum for Kindergarten*, 1999, p. 20). As recorded by Bahovec and Golobič (2004), the hidden curriculum is the daily routine—It takes place every day, every week, every month, every year, and it is all-around. Kroflič (2005) pointed out that if we place in the hidden curriculum those elements of real happenings in kindergarten that are not recorded in official documents, it becomes clear that it includes those actions of preschool teachers, which are not reflected and immediately planned. Those acts, which mainly affect preschool teacher's implicit theories and notions about the child, are mainly present during periods of a child's free games and daily routine. Apple (1992), who studied the phenomenon of hidden curriculum and learning habits, noted that the children's first experiences in kindergarten are essential for their further life, since they learn in a critical period of socialization, a common understanding of meanings, limitations, and potentials, which are then generalized and performed in subsequent interactions with the environment. As Kroflič (2005) highlighted that with the democratization of educational system in Slovenia, we have, i.e., by adopting the curriculum for kindergarten in the 1990s, thoroughly loosened the previous ideological influence on the kindergartens practice.

The principle of an open national curriculum for kindergarten attributes a greater role in the planning of kindergarten or preschool teachers and enables them to maintain their views on raising children in particular at a time when there is a great appreciation for spontaneous communication and child-oriented pedagogical activity. Democratization and the increased autonomy of preschool teachers have also increased the risk that the greater part of kindergarten actions is taken by the individual un-reflected ideas of a individual preschool teacher, which are included into the structure of hidden curriculum. Innovation of the curriculum, which reduces the risk, however, is the requirement that the preschool teachers become aware of the importance of elements of the daily routine and places them in their reflection and the operational plan. The openness of the national curriculum, therefore, implies a requirement that the preschool teachers include in their reflection and operational planning also a reflection about how they will structure child's "living space", what kind of toys or materials they will offer within the time allocated to the free game, how they will be included in the child's self-initiative activities, how they will organize available time for the implementation of elements of the daily routines and, in particular, how they will correlate the spontaneous elements of daily life with a more structured means of targeted activities, and thereby enable the realization of the objectives and principles of curriculum. Daily routine as a component of a hidden curriculum is therefore structured mainly by preschool teachers' knowledge of the basis of a child's development and strategies of early teaching as well as their personal holdings of good for the child. Reflection of this value and own personal values became a prerequisite to identify opportunities for positive change for those least structured elements of the child's stay in kindergarten (*Curriculum for Kindergarten*, 1999).

In planning for and implementing of the curriculum, it is, as a result of systematic loosening and removal of barriers, in which condition hidden curriculum, required to conform to group differences and create conditions for their expression, diversity, and multiculturalism at the level of a selection of content, activities and materials, respect for the specificities of the environment, children and parents, provide activities for children in the whole group, in small groups, and on an individual level and an appropriate complement, and combine different types of activities. The right to choice and diversity must be understood at a level of planning as the offered options of choice, which is also necessary to be taken into account in the organization of sleep and rest, feeding and other needs, which are part of the daily routine (*Curriculum for Kindergarten*, 1999).

The Daily Routine

Democratization of the curriculum is therefore based on respect for children's rights, which includes loosening and removing of the barriers, related to daily routine and hidden curriculum, and gives children the possibility to choose among a variety of activities. With the principle of openness of the curriculum, everyday activities in kindergarten (interaction and communication with and among children, use of praise and criticism, and the rules for the control of time and space, feeding, rest, etc.) are as important as the objectives and contents represented in the curriculum. It represents the content or activities which are substantially related to the daily routine and in which hidden curriculum may have the strongest effect (*Curriculum for Kindergarten*, 1999). Although the daily routine is quiet, discreet and no less active, the child does not learn anything less as they learn by the content of curriculum.

Parts of the daily routine are the arrival of a child in kindergarten and departure from home, caring for oneself, feeding (meals), rest and/or sleep as well as editing and cleaning room where children participate with their own ideas, which are independent and not divided according to sex (Bahovec & Golobič 2004). Daily

routine consists of periods of active learning, which are planning, implementation, restoration, working in small and large groups, outdoor games, transitional activities as well as feeding and resting. It is designed so that it strengthens and promotes the child's abilities, natural interests, self-initiative, and the skills of solving problems (Vrbovšek, 2005). Since the first day in kindergarten children gradually raise the agenda and tasks that are part of the curriculum (official and hidden). Routine includes activities that children adapt and implement without thinking about their relevance. Most of these tasks are reasonable and necessary for the common life in kindergarten, but some of them are unnecessary or even burdensome (Ebert, 2002, p. 173). Daily routine, consistent of specific time elements, helps preschool teachers to organize the time with the children. Such performance of the daily routine supports the child's initiative and creates a framework for children which represents the psychological security and dedicated environment. In addition, daily routine also facilitates the passage of the children from home to kindergarten because it builds a sense of community (Hohmann & Weikart, 2002).

Research (Bahovec & Kodolja, 1996) about the routine in the Slovene kindergartens carried out before adopting the curriculum for kindergarten showed that in the past in Slovene kindergartens there was strong concern for hygiene expressed, which could result in medicalization of kindergarten. The proposed changes were mainly in the context of a larger individualization as opposed to routines and "collectivism", mostly during feeding, rest, hygiene (for which was in the past intended 24% of the time), in the implementation of the curriculum there should be as little rituals, preparation, waiting as possible, and minimal regulations of the "daily routine". Excessive routines have been highlighted in feeding and rest in the past. In the *Curriculum for Kindergartens* (1999), the choice is also respected in feeding and rest. Both should take place calmly, without undue wait, preparing and rush in the dishes. The choice and the option for the children to serve themselves are allowed during feeding the competition, and comparisons should be avoided and specific habits of families should be taken into account. Rest and sleep are no longer mandatory, nor is the time too strictly defined, organization itself depends on individual needs. Passages from the activities or from lunch to the rest are gradual and should take place calmly and without undue haste.

With the acceptance of the *Curriculum for Kindergarten* in 1999, Ebert (2002, p. 178) saw progress in elimination of severe routines in terms of increased flexibility and more released pedagogical approaches, particularly in the areas not affected by sanitary control. Progress is also reflected in more frequent drawing of the attention to the problems which occur in practice.

Methodology

Below are presented the results of research carried out in the project "Professional training of educational staff for implementing special educational principles of Reggio Emilia concept in the field of preschool education in the years 2008–2013" in 2009 and 2011. The question of the research was linked to learning about the views of professional workers (preschool teachers and their assistants) on the importance of the daily routine in kindergarten and especially on the importance of its implementation in the light of the objectives of the official *Curriculum for Kindergarten* (1999) and from the point of view of the informal curriculum and its implementation in the kindergarten, which affect the lives and work of the kindergarten.

In the context of the first research (2009), where 331 preschool teachers, their assistants, and others participated, and the second repeated research (2011), where 212 preschool teachers and their assistants participated, we ask the following fundamental research questions: (1) Whether and how often preschool

teachers and their assistants plan activities or routines (arrival, feeding, pursuit of toiletry needs, rest and/or sleep, oriented activities, free play and activities according to the choice of the child, staying outdoors) in kindergarten? (2) How flexible is the daily routine in kindergarten (which of the activities of the daily routine takes place always at the same time for all children)? (3) How are the rest and sleep implemented in kindergarten; are professionals taking into account new orientations for the implementation of this daily activities? and (4) How is eating implemented in kindergarten? Are preschool teachers and their assistants taking into account children's desires and new orientations for the implementation of these activities?

Prior to the research, we posed the following hypotheses: (H1) We anticipate that preschool teachers and their assistants plan activities for all children daily. We also anticipate that the planning is made in a team; (H2) We anticipate that the daily routine is pretty inflexible and that most of the activities of the daily routine still take place for all children at the same time; (H3) We anticipate that rest and sleep are not mandatory for all children at the same time; and (H4) We anticipate that the children can choose what and how much they will eat for breakfast, snack, and lunch and that they can talk during meals. We also anticipate that preschool teachers and their assistants are not running hard (hidden disciplinary) regime, as for example, children must eat all the food devoted to them by preschool teachers and wait by the table until everybody finishes eating. Empirical research is based on the quantitative pedagogical research, so we used the descriptive and causal-unempirical methods. In a research, we included preschool teachers and their assistants from 96 kindergartens across Slovenia.

This questionnaire was partially closed, partially open type, and was in 2009 and 2011 divided between the 550 participants in education and training within the project "Reggio Emilia". Data have been processed with the statistical package SPSS-X PC (17.0) and Excel (2007).

Results and Discussion

Planning of Activities or Routine in the Kindergarten

Whether and how often preschool teachers and their assistants plan activities or routines, which in principle are not an integral part of the *Curriculum for Kindergarten* (1999), but they are among the activities of the implementation of the curriculum, which was one of the questions we asked the participants of the education in the project (see Table 1). We listed the activities that are held in kindergarten every day, such as arrival, feeding, pursuit of toiletry needs, rest and/or sleep, oriented activities, free play and activities according to the preference of children, staying outdoors—activities of daily routine. Planning education, the educational work, and the planning of the daily routines in kindergarten is one of the important processes for achieving the objectives of preschool education. In the context of this question, we also wanted to find out whether the professional workers in kindergarten (preschool teachers as well as their assistants) plan their work as a team. We anticipated that the majority of preschool teachers plan activities daily. However, we also anticipated that activities are planned together as a result of joint work.

The most interesting (and at the same time very worrisome) thing is that this question was not answered by 131 or 39.6% of all professional male and female workers, participating in education and training in project Reggio Emilia. As we noted, we assumed that professionals in kindergarten plan their activities daily and that they prepare for the work together as a team. Unfortunately, this is not so. In the first research, we determined that nearly 40% of preschool teachers and only 15.5% preschool teachers' assistants plan their work daily and in a research held in 2011, this percentage is even slightly lower with preschool teachers and 2% higher with

their assistants. We have determined that professional workers together with preschool teachers as well as their assistants often plan their work in different kinds of time periods or according to projects (2009: 39.7%, 2011: 36.1%). Professional workers are also using the weekly planning. Interesting is the fact that in 2009, 22% of preschool teachers and 36.2% of their assistants were planning their work weekly and in the year 2011 more than 3% of preschool teachers and nearly less than 7% of their assistants were doing so. In 2011, however, the percent also fell for the professional workers who plan their work in kindergarten daily. More than these figures, however, we are surprised by the fact that there is a lack of teamwork. We were sure that there was more of it.

Table 1

Planning Activities of Educational Work

| Planning of the activities | 2009 | | | | | | 2011 | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------|--------------|-------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------|--------------|
| | Preschool teacher | | p.t. assistant | | together | | Preschool teacher | | p.t. assistant | | together | |
| | <i>f</i> | <i>f</i> (%) | <i>f</i> | <i>f</i> (%) | <i>f</i> | <i>f</i> (%) | <i>f</i> | <i>f</i> (%) | <i>f</i> | <i>f</i> (%) | <i>f</i> | <i>f</i> (%) |
| Every day | 56 | 39.7 | 9 | 15.5 | 65 | 32.7 | 26 | 30.6 | 6 | 17.6 | 32 | 26.9 |
| Weekly | 32 | 22.7 | 21 | 36.2 | 53 | 26.6 | 24 | 28.2 | 14 | 41.2 | 38 | 31.9 |
| In different time periods or projects | 49 | 34.8 | 23 | 39.7 | 72 | 36.2 | 32 | 37.6 | 11 | 32.4 | 43 | 36.1 |
| Others | 4 | 2.8 | 3 | 5.2 | 7 | 3.5 | 2 | 2.4 | 1 | 2.9 | 3 | 2.5 |
| Cannot answer | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 3.4 | 2 | 1.0 | 1 | 1.2 | 2 | 5.9 | 3 | 2.5 |
| Together | 141 | 100 | 58 | 100 | 199 | 100 | 85 | 100 | 34 | 100 | 119 | 100 |

We were also interested in whether preschool teachers and their assistants include children in the planning of the activities (see Table 2). We have asked them whether they include them—why and why not. We offered some answers such as: (A1) I do not include them because they are still too small; (A2) I do not include them, because planning is my job; (A3) I plan by myself, but I also consider the wishes and interests of children; (A4) I prepare an indicative plan and then talk it over with the children and change the plan according to the wishes and interests of the children; (A5) I make plans together with children; and (A6) Others.

Table 2

Including Children in Planning Activities in Kindergarten

| Statement | 2009 | | | 2011 | | |
|-----------|----------|--------------|------|----------|--------------|------|
| | <i>f</i> | <i>f</i> (%) | Rank | <i>f</i> | <i>f</i> (%) | Rank |
| A1 | 19 | 8.1 | 4 | 50 | 10.1 | 4 |
| A2 | 1 | 0.4 | 6 | 4 | 0.8 | 6 |
| A3 | 32 | 13.6 | 3 | 129 | 26.2 | 2 |
| A4 | 102 | 43.2 | 1 | 172 | 34.9 | 1 |
| A5 | 66 | 28.0 | 2 | 97 | 19.7 | 3 |
| A6 | 16 | 6.8 | 5 | 41 | 8.3 | 5 |
| Together | 236 | 100 | / | 493 | 100 | / |

The results of both researches suggest that professional workers in kindergarten often plan their work in such manner, they choose the topic, prepare an indicative plan and then discuss it with children and change the plan depending on the children's wishes and interests (A4). Over 43% of all professional workers in 2009 used such a way of planning and (interestingly) less than 10% in 2011. Also interesting is the fact that in the year 2011, 26.2% of professional workers planned their work by themselves, since they believe that the planning of activities is in the professional domain of professional workers, however, they generally took into account

wishes and interests of children. We were expecting a larger percent of planning together with children (A5). Still, the share of those professional workers who believe that children are too small to be included in the work is still too large.

Activities Carried out Always at the Same Time for All Children in Kindergarten

We were also interested in how flexible the daily routine in Slovene kindergartens is or which activities of the daily routine are always taking place at the same time for all children (see Table 3). We anticipated that the daily routine in kindergarten is pretty inflexible and that most of the activities of the daily routine still take place for all children at the same time. Almost all (94.2%) preschool teachers and their assistants in the first and the second research listed lunch as an activity or routine, which in their kindergarten takes place every day at the same time for all children. If you look at the results from 2009, we can see that the following three predominant activities or routines, are represented in their kindergartens: breakfast (86.7% of all respondents), rest or sleep (77% of all respondents), and stay in the open, which is represented by 55.0% of all preschool teachers and their assistants. The last three posts occupied: oriented activities (39.0% of all preschool teachers and their assistants), free play and activities, at the choice of the children (33.2% of all respondents), and the provision of toilet needs, which is represented by 21.1% of all included preschool teachers and their assistants.

Table 3

Activities, Taking Part in Kindergarten Every Day at the Same Time

| Activities or routines in kindergarten taking place every day at the same time for all children. | 2009 | | | 2011 | | |
|--|----------|--------------|------|----------|--------------|------|
| | Yes | | Rank | Yes | | Rank |
| | <i>f</i> | <i>f</i> (%) | | <i>f</i> | <i>f</i> (%) | |
| Children's arrival | 133 | 40.3 | 7 | 59 | 35.3 | 5 |
| Breakfast | 286 | 86.7 | 2 | 140 | 83.8 | 2 |
| Lunch | 311 | 94.2 | 1 | 161 | 96.4 | 1 |
| Afternoon snack | 166 | 50.3 | 5 | 53 | 31.7 | 6 |
| Provision of toilet needs | 69 | 20.9 | 10 | 8 | 4.8 | 10 |
| Personal hygiene | 152 | 46.1 | 6 | 42 | 25.1 | 8 |
| Rest or sleep | 254 | 77.0 | 3 | 116 | 69.5 | 3 |
| Focused activities | 128 | 38.8 | 8 | 43 | 25.7 | 7 |
| Free play and child-oriented activities | 109 | 33.0 | 9 | 35 | 21.0 | 9 |
| Staying outside | 181 | 54.8 | 4 | 78 | 46.7 | 4 |
| Others | 17 | 5.2 | 11 | 7 | 4.2 | 11 |

Results from the year 2011 are fairly similar. Activities that take place almost every day at the same time in the opinion of professional workers are: lunch, breakfast, sleep or rest, and staying outdoors. More flexibility is noticed in the game outside and the game according to the child-oriented activities, in the afternoon light meals, focused activities, the provision of toilet needs and hygiene. Even expecting such results, we still feel that the work is still too inflexible. Recent orientations in terms of sleep are that sleep if they wish too. If they are not sleepy, they can carry out peaceful work or play. Perhaps it would make sense to try to change ingrained practice with the continuing education and training.

Rest and Sleep in Kindergarten

In 2009, a third of preschool teachers and their assistants (36.2%) stated that the rest and sleep in kindergarten mean (see Table 4) that all children lie down to rest and anyone who does not go to sleep can get

up and play, a poor third (29.5%) answered that at the time of rest all children go to sleep and under one-tenth of them (10.1%) stated that only children who need sleep go to sleep. Only 7.4% of all professional workers replied that all children lie down to rest, and whoever does not go to sleep, rests on the desk, and also 7% of all preschool teachers and their assistants stated that all children lie down to rest and anyone who does not go to sleep gets a toy or a book. Eight percent of professional workers, however, said that none of the children in the section is not sleeping—They are all sleeping.

Table 4

Children's Rest and Sleep in Kindergarten

| How is rest and sleep taking place in your section? | Professional workers | | | |
|---|----------------------|--------------|----------|--------------|
| | 2009 | | 2011 | |
| | <i>f</i> | <i>f</i> (%) | <i>f</i> | <i>f</i> (%) |
| All children sleep | 88 | 29.5 | 36 | 25.5 |
| All children lie down to rest, and whoever does not go to sleep, rests on the deck | 22 | 7.4 | 9 | 6.4 |
| All children lie down to rest and anyone who does not go to sleep, gets a toy or a book | 21 | 7.0 | 9 | 6.4 |
| All children lie down to rest and anyone who does not go to sleep, can get up and play | 108 | 36.2 | 63 | 44.7 |
| Only children who need sleep go to sleep | 30 | 10.1 | 11 | 7.8 |
| Nobody sleeps | 24 | 8.1 | 6 | 4.3 |
| Others | 5 | 1.7 | 7 | 5.0 |
| Together | 298 | 100 | 141 | 100 |

Compared to the year 2011, we can see that the percentage of professional workers (44.7%) which indicates that all children lie down to rest and whoever does not go to sleep, can stand up and play increased. A quarter of the children go to sleep and there are a smaller percentage of children who are not sleeping or resting in the kindergarten. If we compare the years 2009 and 2011 on regarding children's rest and sleep, there are no (statistically significant) differences ($\chi^2 = 12.326$, $g = 7$, $P = 0.090$).

However, we asked preschool teachers and their assistants about how many children sleep in the kindergarten; we got the following, somewhat contradictory information regarding sleep and rest of children (see Table 5).

Table 5

Rest and Sleep in Separate Sections in Kindergarten

| How many children in your section sleep? | Together | | | |
|---|----------|--------------|----------|--------------|
| | 2009 | | 2011 | |
| | <i>f</i> | <i>f</i> (%) | <i>f</i> | <i>f</i> (%) |
| Everybody sleeps | 106 | 33.0 | 42 | 24.7 |
| There are exceptionally some children in the section that may not go to sleep | 127 | 39.6 | 81 | 47.6 |
| Majority of children do not sleep, only a few of them sleep | 59 | 18.4 | 39 | 22.9 |
| Nobody sleeps | 29 | 9.0 | 8 | 4.7 |
| Together | 321 | 100 | 170 | 100 |

In 2009, a maximum of (39.6%) preschool teachers and their assistants stated that there are exceptionally some children in the section that may not go to sleep, a poor third (33.0%) of them assessed that at the time of the rest all children in section fall asleep. That in the section at the time of rest only a few children sleep, while most are not asleep, stated 18.4% of all respondents. Nine percent of preschool teachers and their assistants

responded that in their own section no one sleeps at the time of rest. In 2011, however, 47.6% of professional workers indicated that there is exceptionally a child in the section who does not go to sleep, the percentage of those who said that all the children at the time of rest sleep decreased, and the percentage of those who contended that most children are not asleep (22.9%) increased.

We assumed that rest and sleep are not compulsory for all children. Our projections have been predetermined and also confirmed. A more detailed analysis of the data revealed that the statements “Most children do not sleep” and “Nobody sleeps” were chosen by professional workers in the second age groups of children (3–6 years old) and the statement “Only in exceptional cases there is a child who is not asleep” was chosen by professional workers in the first age group (1–3 years old).

Feeding of Children in Kindergarten

We were also interested in the feeding and eating in kindergarten. In particular, we were interested in whether children can choose what to eat and how much, or even if they have a choice, how preschool teachers and their assistants behave during feeding, whether there are notable elements of the hidden curriculum, or familiarization with the “discipline of nutrition”, which means children need to eat everything that they get on the plate, they must not talk during eating and they must eat at a specific time, etc..

We assumed that children can choose what and how much they will eat for breakfast, snack, and lunch and that at the time of eating there can be talking. We also assumed that preschool teachers and their assistants are not running hard (hidden disciplinary) regime, for example, children need to eat all the food and wait at the table until everybody is finished.

Table 6

Treatment of Professional Workers During Meals in Kindergarten

| Statement | 2009 | | | 2011 | | |
|---|----------|--------------|------|----------|--------------|------|
| | <i>f</i> | <i>f</i> (%) | Rank | <i>f</i> | <i>f</i> (%) | Rank |
| Children can choose what to eat for breakfast | 39 | 11.8 | 7 | 30 | 16.7 | 7 |
| Children can choose what to eat for snack | 89 | 26.9 | 6 | 68 | 37.8 | 4 |
| Children can choose how much they want to eat | 281 | 84.9 | 1 | 147 | 81.7 | 1 |
| Children can choose what to eat and what not | 249 | 75.2 | 3 | 129 | 71.7 | 3 |
| I insist that they at least try food they decline | 118 | 35.6 | 4 | 50 | 27.8 | 5 |
| I insist that they eat all the food they have taken. | 23 | 6.9 | 10 | 8 | 4.4 | 10 |
| Children who finish eating must wait by the table for the majority to stop eating | 102 | 30.8 | 5 | 33 | 18.3 | 6 |
| Children get praised for eating quickly | 21 | 6.3 | 11 | 1 | 0.6 | 11 |
| I allow talking during meals | 255 | 77.0 | 2 | 138 | 76.7 | 2 |
| I encourage children to talk during meals | 24 | 7.3 | 9 | 20 | 11.1 | 8 |
| Others | 36 | 10.9 | 8 | 18 | 10.0 | 9 |

Results from 2009 and 2011 are similar (see Table 6). Most preschool teachers and their assistants stated that “Children can choose how much they want to eat”. A good three-fourths of them replied that children can talk among themselves during meals, as well as three-fourths of them stated that they can choose what to eat and what not. Preschool teachers and their assistants insisted that children at least try food they decline, and a poor third of them considered that the children who have already eaten have to wait at the table until most of the children finish eating. The last three posts were occupied by the following claims or practices in nutrition: Children are encouraged to talk between meals, and they have to eat all the food that they have taken and

preschool teachers and their assistants do not have a habit of praising children who have eaten quickly.

It is very good that most of preschool teachers and their assistants allow children to choose what and how much they are going to eat and permit (but not encouraged) talking during meals. Snack time or lunch can be a pleasant event. There are very few of the elements of the hidden curriculum (hard disciplinary regime) according to the data.

Conclusions

Slovenian national document for preschool education, *Curriculum for Kindergartens* (1999) described the daily activities in kindergarten as an equally important objective and the content of the curriculum enshrined. Since the hidden curriculum can be strongly invoked in the activities of daily routine, professional workers in kindergarten must be aware of the importance of its elements in the implementation of the daily routines. The activities of the daily routines include: arrival in kindergarten and departure from home, caring for oneself, eating (meals), rest and sleep, fixing and cleaning living space. Daily schedule and routine should be designed to follow the needs of children and define the basic structure of any day. If they are designed to follow the needs of children, they make sure that the day takes place smoothly and enjoyable for the children: from the arrival/departure, meals and snacks (feeding should be a sociable event, food should not be used as a reward or punishment, and in meal time we need to recruit children and encourage them to help), sleep and rest, personal hygiene: use of a toilet, dressing up, washing up and all the way to cleaning up and to the transition from one activity to another. There is a big importance of consistency and safety—a sequence of events, confidence, and a sense of belonging to a group. There must be some room left for flexibility and unconstrained, individualization of the process, advance warnings, which are clear and consistent, with regard to the children's proposals and feelings. Daily routine provides children a predictable sequence of events, smooth transitions and consistency in expectations and support of an adult. In "Reggio Emilia", educational concept is that these principles of the daily routine are at the utmost importance.

Research among professional workers in kindergartens, included in the project Reggio Emilia in the years 2009 and 2011, showed certain positive shifts in Slovene kindergartens in carrying out daily routines in the field of nutrition of children and personal hygiene and toilet training, but it will still be necessary to continue with further activities on raising awareness of professional workers in kindergarten in the area of children's sleep or rest. Too many activities in kindergarten take place every day at the same time for all children, there has been insufficient flexibility, implementation of activities outside the premises of the kindergarten, and activities according to the preference of children. The awareness that children are different, and despite the fact that they are "small", they need less sleep and other forms of rest have slowly penetrated into kindergartens practice. The results also show that the preschool teachers and their assistants do not see the child as someone who could actively participate in the planning of activities; they do not see the child as competent being. We will need to raise the level of children's participation in the life of kindergarten, raise the level of democratic decision-making child or children who must gain experience, that the contribution of each child is desirable, and that their ideas are welcome and respected.

For an even better practice in kindergarten we will need to implement more continuing education and training of professional workers in kindergarten with a goal of development of additional competences for the identification of factors of hidden curriculum and implementing the child active and support process of care and education.

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